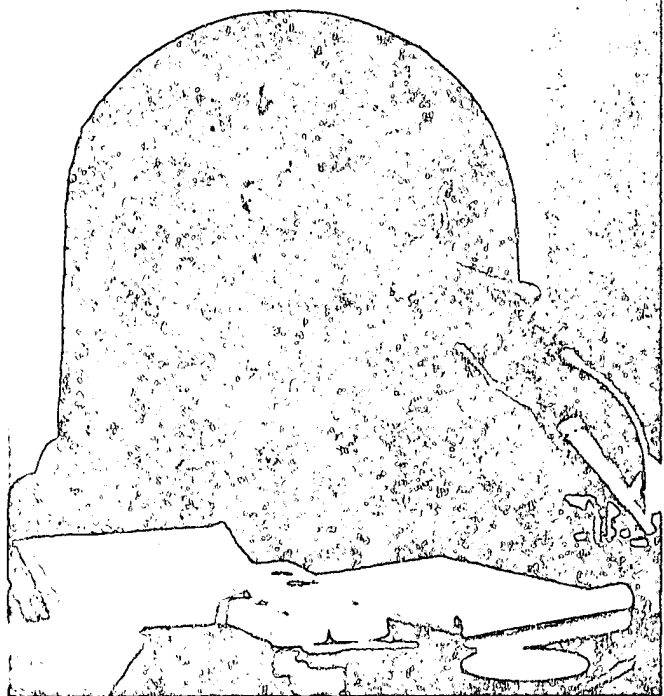
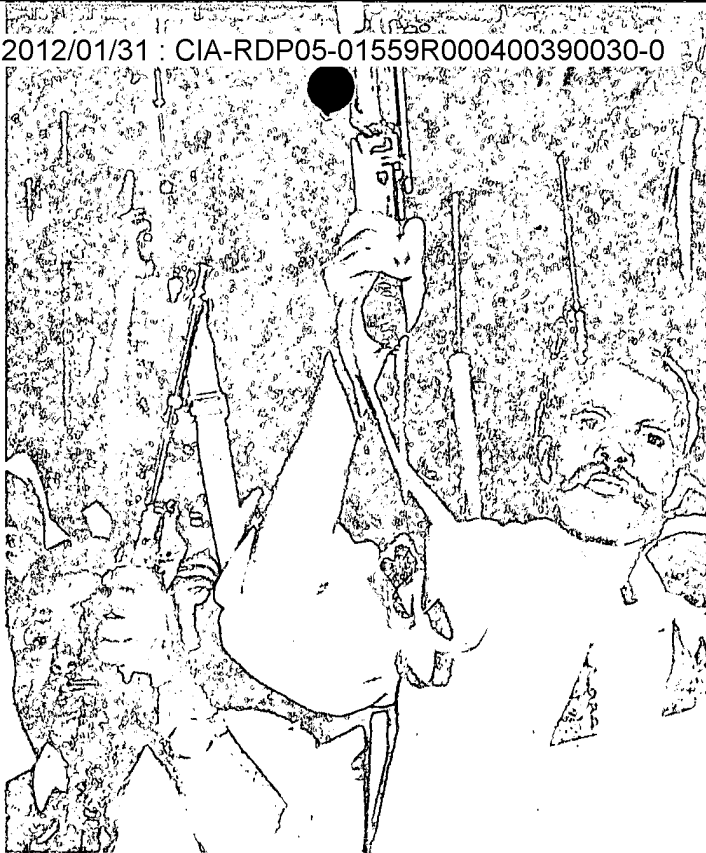


INTERNATIONAL



Rosy Rouleau—Sygma



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Second thoughts, an armed celebration in Tripoli: Facing up to military shortcomings, oil woes and growing political isolation

Kaddafi Changes His Tune

Libya tries to sell a 'good Kaddafi.' The West asks for more evidence.

On the outskirts of Tripoli, in the midst of a sprawling military compound, sits the inner sanctum where Col. Muammar Kaddafi conducts much of his business: a Bedouin tent. From that vantage in recent months, Kaddafi has been surveying Libya's increasing political isolation and contemplating ways to patch up his feud with the West. Kaddafi is already engaged in a rapprochement with Francois Mitterrand's France. And Libyan officials now say that Kaddafi is eager to resume normal diplomatic relations with the United States and would even welcome the opportunity to buy U.S. arms. The Libyans clearly haven't decided how to go about approaching Washington, but their interest in a U.S.-Libyan thaw is manifest. "We don't have to be friends with the United States," says Ibrahim Bjad, a top Kaddafi aide. "But we can have a better relationship based on mutual interests and mutual respect."

Kaddafi's reasons for wanting to rebuild some bridges to the West are clear. In the past year he has been spurned by foes and former allies alike. In the Middle East he has watched fellow Arab radicals edge away from the politics of confrontation. In Africa dissension among members of the Organization of African Unity caused him to lose his turn as OAU chairman. Kaddafi has also encountered problems selling Libyan

oil. Awash in an oil glut, buyers balked at paying Libya's high prices, and Kaddafi had to trim his pricing to keep up production. Several major Libyan oil contracts are up for renegotiation, and analysts predict that Kaddafi will have to swallow even more price reductions.

"Today's Kaddafi is a 'good Kaddafi,'" says one Western diplomat in Tripoli. "He doesn't want to scare anyone." The colonel appears particularly concerned about his reputation for sponsoring terrorism. He says he draws a sharp distinction between "national liberation movements" like the PLO, which he supports, and "terrorist groups" like Italy's Red Brigades, which he denies having anything to do with. Western diplomats in Tripoli now tend to accept such claims, saying that at most Libyan arms and funds are reaching West European terrorists indirectly, through the PLO.

Insurgents: Even so, Kaddafi continues to promote plenty of violence in the name of "national liberation." He recently played host to George Habash and other radical Palestinian leaders, who came to Tripoli seeking money and weapons to use against Israel. Kaddafi boasts openly about Libya's sponsorship of "revolutionary committees" and rebel movements throughout the Arab world and Africa. Such support extends to hands-on training in Libya. At Kaddafi's

new military academies for women, high-school-age Libyan girls drill fumblingly with Kalashnikov rifles and other Soviet weapons alongside recruits from the Polisario Front and other African insurgents.

Kaddafi seems intent on dressing up his relations with the Soviet Union. He denies being a Soviet puppet, insisting that his hefty Soviet arms purchases are purely for self-defense. That claim hardly squares with his policy of passing along Soviet arms to the PLO. Still, he does seem to have gone shopping mostly for Russian defensive weapons—including SAM missiles and other anti-aircraft equipment—since U.S. jets shot down two Libyan fighters over the Gulf of Sidra 17 months ago. Now Kaddafi may be seeking to ease his dependence on Soviet hardware. The prospect of buying some new, advanced Western weaponry is clearly a major incentive in the dialogue that is gathering momentum between Tripoli and Paris. Kaddafi is thought to be particularly eager to acquire some of France's sophisticated Crotale and Exocet missiles.

As one peace gesture to Paris, Kaddafi has sent signals to French officials that he is not preparing another intervention in Chad. Libya lost as many as 1,000 soldiers during its incursion in Chad, and Kaddafi is believed to be reluctant to risk such heavy losses again. Libya's recent oil woes have



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A family that prays together: Flashes of reasonableness, signs of extremism

Kaddafi Talks About Kaddafi

For a man who is trying to clean up his image, Muammar Kaddafi remains as outspoken as ever. In an interview with NEWSWEEK's Mark Whitaker, Kaddafi talked about the West's view of him—and his view of the West. Excerpts:

On His Image in the West: The views of the American people on Islam and me and Libya are false. The Americans have been misled, because Zionism owns the mass media. It gives the American people the wrong idea about Kaddafi, about Islam and about the outside world.

On Terrorism and National Liberation: There is a big difference between terrorism and national liberation. The struggle of the people in Namibia and the struggle of the Palestinian people are just causes. On the other side are clandestine terrorist groups such

as the Red Brigades in Italy. I do not condemn the social and psychological and political reasons that have given birth to these terrorist groups. But we condemn the methods of the Red Brigades and the Baader-Meinhof group—the assassinations and kidnappings and threats. We could never, under any circumstances, have any relationship with them.

On Libya's Soviet and American Relations: The experience since the revolution has shown us that the Western bloc appears to be inimical and quite hostile to us. We have not been fought or angered by the Eastern bloc, even though we were slightly hostile to them at the beginning of the revolution. We have learned a lesson from our experience. We have been able to define who is the enemy and who is the friend.

On Soviet Arms Purchases: These arms are for self-defense. To say that this is overarming is simply Zionist and American propaganda. These weapons are barely sufficient. In fact, they are insufficient. As for the question of against whom they might be used, that is a question that should be posed to all the countries of the world. To those who produce nuclear weapons, we ask: "Whom are they directed against?"

On the Fight Against Israel: The confrontation states have been defeated several times because they have not been serious. Their planning was not long-term planning. Otherwise what is called Israel could have been finished off in about 24 hours. Two or three Arab states can finish Israel in less than a day.

On Libyan Policy Toward Chad: It's not true that we are preparing a new intervention in Chad. We are not disposed to playing the role of the eternal policeman in Chad. But we also refuse to see another foreign power intervene in Chad. The situation in Chad affects Libya's security and its frontiers more than any other country in the world.

had an additional chastening effect. When the production crisis hit last year, Kaddafi was forced to impose an austerity program and to suspend many of his government's ambitious development projects. Today, dozens of construction sites around Tripoli stand abandoned, and many consumer supplies at Libya's huge government supermarkets are uneven at best.

Grievances: Whether Kaddafi's predicament will lead to any concrete efforts to make peace with the United States remains unclear. The Libyans still harbor a deep distrust of America. Their grievances run from U.S. support for Israel and the Gulf of Sidra incident to the Reagan administration's charges that Kaddafi hired a "hit squad" to assassinate the president, a story that Libyan officials call "ridiculous." For now, Libyan officials are couching their interest in better U.S.-Libyan relations only in the most guarded terms. "Put it this way,"

says Libyan Foreign Secretary Abdel Ati al Ubaidi. "We believe that there is no such thing as permanently bad relations."

For its part, Washington is unlikely to shed its suspicions about Kaddafi anytime soon. His strong ties to Moscow, his intransigence on the Middle East issue and his unabated taste for exporting revolution through the Third World will continue to make Reagan officials just as wary of him as he is of them. And Kaddafi remains as unpredictable as ever. At times Kaddafi can seem "very reasonable," explains one Western diplomat in Tripoli. But this official also says that there is a "more extreme Kaddafi, who has become increasingly radical and intransigent with time." For the moment, the Libyans may want to sell the "good Kaddafi." But the West will need a lot more evidence before accepting that the "bad Kaddafi" is still not the real one.

MARK WHITAKER in Tripoli

MIDEAST

The Habib Shuttle Hits an Air Pocket

Special envoy Philip Habib had hoped to speed the withdrawal of Israeli and Syrian troops from Lebanon when he set out on his latest round of shuttle diplomacy, but last week he still had little to show for his efforts. In Jerusalem, Habib argued that Israel should pull all of its forces out of Lebanon without delay and soft-pedal its demand for "normalization" of relations between the two countries. To the Israelis, that sounded like a less-than-evenhanded policy. "There is no sign that Washington is demanding withdrawal from the Syrians or the PLO," complained one senior Israeli. "We're the only party Habib leans on."

Habib and the Israelis differed on most of the issues currently on the Lebanese